

AMHERST/LA PAZ CENTRO SISTER CITY COMMITTEE

Minutes

March 3rd, 2011

PRESENT: Carol and Paul Baker, Liz Etheridge, Chuck and Nancy Milch, Kathy and Walter Mullin, Mary Santiago, Lyle Seger, Anne and Ed Stanek, Lydia Vernon-Jones, Carol Wood.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Kathy presented and reviewed the following:

Beginning deposit: \$13,797.34.

We paid \$4,039.44 in January and February related to the following:

Scholarship program \$3,412

Plane for one committee member \$594.10

Fundraising supplies \$11.34

Stamps \$22

This reduces the balance to \$9,757.90

Still to pay is \$105.92, which includes:

Cost of wire \$68.20

accounting book \$28.92

stamps \$8.80

This reduces the balance to \$9,651.98.

I still need the receipt for the calculators--possibly other things. We have 26 students instead of 25 so we will have to send a bit more money.

Fundicep has an account with BDF in Leon. As Julio had told us there is a small list of items he needs to get the bank before they will activate the account

again (2 reference letters – one from the school and one from a vendor that he uses). He believes this is within reach. There were 17 documents in total required for registering a non-profit with the government. All the government materials have been submitted and the bank is waiting for approval of the Government Assembly (something like our Dept of State). The bank confirmed that there is a total of \$3,259 in the account. The minimum balance is \$1,000. This is both good and bad news. The good news is that there is \$\$ in the account and the account even exists! The bad news is that according to my calculation there should be a minimum of \$4,300 in the account comprised of \$2,500 minimum balance and \$1,800 for the June 2008 wire to buy the land. I have an email in to Julio to account for the difference.

The account went inactive back in May, 2010. The good news is that it is not closed. When it gets reopened there will be a bit of accrued interest that will be deposited into the account. The bank rep was very clear to Julio that since this was a foundation, the account has to be very transparent. The more he hears this the better! We agreed that there should be at least three people on the account and two to sign every withdrawal. He does not need to go through the long process of validating the organization with the government every time the signatures change. The issue before was that the rules had changed and Fundicep had never updated the paperwork with the government agency. Keep in mind that in the U.S. a foundation also has to be registered with the government so this requirement is not unusual.

I received clear instructions for wiring which is good because this was a problem in the past.

The Sunday night meeting in La Paz Centro with Julio, Kathy, Walter and Anne consisted of an explanation by Julio of the banking issues (corroborated by the bank report above). Kathy emphasized the need for a Treasurer who would be a third signature on the bank account and would keep track of money, receipts, etc. She pointed out that if we have this in place we would be able to expand to projects beyond the scholarship program. We are happy to pay the treasurer (perhaps \$20 per month). Julio was open to this and said that he would look for a treasurer.

DELEGATION REPORT:

We reviewed some items from the delegation report (see separate report). There was also some other news about former scholarship students which was reported:

Elizabeth, a 2008 graduate of the program, is now married to a lawyer, lives on the other side of the highway in La Paz Centro and is in her 4th year of an MBA program. She is a shining example of the good that the scholarship program can do.

Anabel, a 2009 graduate, is working very hard – six days a week at a Brazilian owned shoe factory in Managua, making \$60 per month. She is trying to save to attend a private university (she did not make the cut for the public university), which will cost her \$20 per month.

Andreas, a first year scholarship student, and her mother, Nora, were the victims of a major storm that demolished their home. They are presently living with relatives.

MEETING WITH SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS (*BECADOS*)

Walter, Kathy and Steve met with 12 of the 26 scholarship students, ranging from shy first year students to more confident 5th year students. They had lots to say:

GOOD:

They expressed so much appreciation for the program, saying that they could not go to school without the help of the program. One mentioned that she was one of 7 children in her family and she was the only one able to attend school, thanks to the scholarship. Another was Andreas, whose family lost their home this past year.

PROBLEMS:

1. A need for books to use for home study. The books at school cannot be brought home.
2. A need for high level graphing calculators.
3. A need for gym shorts
4. A desire to attend a computer course
5. Requests for help with tuition and transportation costs for university
6. A request for help with fees such as matriculation, exam and report card fees. It is unclear whether these items really are charged fees or if the students are speaking of fees around graduation celebrations and dances. It is clear that the scholarship students, because they are poorer than others attending Pablo Sexto, feel separated from the social milieu of the school.

We followed Walter's report with the beginning of a discussion about supplying books and calculators to the La Paz Centro town library, which is on the way back from their school and therefore easily accessible to the students. We will continue this discussion at the next meeting.

We really want to involve Victoria Feyre Febonio in the committee, but she has a regular Thursday night commitment. However, others have commitments other

nights so we decided to stick with our Thursday night meeting for April and hope that Victoria can join us in May.

Following are the meetings scheduled for May – Aug:

Thursday, May 26

Thursday, June 16

Thursday, July 21

Thursday, August 25

The next meeting will be Thursday, April 28th at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne Stanek

Chair